

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 527

By Carter

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of W. D. (Bill) Manning,
Mayor of Bradford.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Mayor W. D. (Bill) Manning, a decorated war hero and a former Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Bill Manning was born September 18, 1936, in McAlester, Oklahoma; at the age of six months, he moved with his family to California, where he lived until the age of 17; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Mr. Manning joined the United States Army, and served until his retirement in 1970; his service included two tours of duty in Vietnam and the loss of his left arm and shoulder and right hand to a rocket grenade attack during the second Vietnam tour; and

WHEREAS, Bill Manning's valor in combat earned him the Silver Star, a Bronze Star for Valor, two Bronze Stars for Meritorious Service, two Purple Hearts, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the Air Medal, and the Combat Infantry Badge; following his retirement from the military, Mr. Manning developed a prosthesis for which he obtained a patent, and for a period of time he and Colonel Lew Millet manufactured the prostheses in Trenton; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Manning was fitted with an artificial left arm and with a grasping hook device on his right hand; pursuing successive projects to improve his self-sufficiency, he learned

to pick up a paper cup without crushing it, to shave with a straight-edge razor, and to operate a car and tractor with a self-devised steering knob; and

WHEREAS, only a few months out of the hospital, Bill Manning coached Little League baseball, reasoning that although he could not throw a ball or swing a bat, he could teach others to do so; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Mr. Manning was elected to a term on the Gibson County Court, and, in 1974, he was elected Gibson County Register of Deeds, serving four terms; he also served as City Judge and City Recorder of Bradford, as well as serving on the Bradford Board of Aldermen; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, Governor Ned McWherter appointed Bill Manning to serve in his cabinet as Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, where he served for eight years, retiring in 1995; he was instrumental in the construction of three veterans' retirement homes and three veterans' cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Manning was honored for his service as Commissioner when the state legislature, in 1990, awarded him the Tennessee Distinguished Service Medal; in 1992, the General Assembly named the Administration Building at the West Tennessee State Veterans' Cemetery in Germantown the "W. D. (Bill) Manning Building," and, in 1995, the General Assembly named the West Tennessee Veterans' Home in Humboldt the "W. D. (Bill) Manning Home"; and

WHEREAS, as Commissioner, Bill Manning brought about improvements in service officers' training across the state and directed the organization of the Tennessee County Service Officers Association; during his tenure, Mr. Manning was appointed Brigadier General in the Tennessee Defense Force, now called the Tennessee State Guard; and

WHEREAS, following his retirement as Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, Mr. Manning returned to Bradford, was elected Mayor, and was serving in his second term at the time of his death; as Mayor, he along with volunteers, was able to revive the Doodle Soup Festival and lead a volunteer clean-up of the town; and

WHEREAS, throughout his career in local and state government, Bill Manning was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Manning was an active and devout member of the First Baptist church, which he served faithfully for over 20 years as a Sunday school teacher for the Follower's class; he was a 32nd Degree Mason, a Shriner, and a member of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and the Military Order of the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, Bill Manning was an avid hunter and a horseback rider, who raised quarter horses; in his younger days, he enjoyed drag racing and restoring old cars and trucks, never letting the loss of limbs deter him from following whatever interest he might choose to pursue; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Manning was concerned as to whether he could compete as a show horse rider with his prosthesis, until he won third place in a 42-horse event on his first outing; he went on to earn 32 ribbons in shows throughout central Tennessee and Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, Bill Manning opened a tack shop on a shoestring to sell saddles and bridles when he was turned down for a car salesman job; he continued to ride almost daily and began to train and trade horses, even doing the grooming and shearing himself; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Manning once said of himself, "The old Bill Manning was a selfish man. He didn't have time to spend with his family. He had no interest in helping other people; I wouldn't trade places with him for the world"; and

WHEREAS, the inspirational story of Bill Manning's journey in overcoming his physical limitations was captured in the February 1973 issue of *Reader's Digest* "New Profiles in Courage" section; the account of his steadfast persistence and determination was clearly worthy of its selection and serves as a model for others faced with a loss of limbs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Manning was described by Governor McWherter as "a fine man with a fine family and a wonderful friend and a great inspiration to these young men who wear the uniform today"; Mrs. Cleo McCartney, a second cousin of Jane Manning, said of Mr. Manning,

"He was very honorable, very considerate...Mr. Manning had been through terrible ordeals in his lifetime, and he always took it with a smile. He will be greatly missed"; and

WHEREAS, Bill Manning was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Jane Holder Manning and was the proud parent of sons Roy, Mike and Mark; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his wife and sons, Mr. Manning is survived by his sisters, Ann Byrum and Shirley Sergeant; brothers J. A. Manning, Oland Manning, Jerald Manning, and Wayne Manning; nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, W. D. (Bill) Manning leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of W. D. (Bill) Manning, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Bill Manning.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.